

PROJECT ESSAY

My Ministry With Primary Children ,  
Central Presbyterian Church  
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## PREFACE

The writer of this project report had the privilege to work with the primary group, of Central Presbyterian Church in 1970 - 72 toward partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of master of Religious Education. This was a meaningful experience which helped the author to use the methods and teachings learned in the classroom of the field education course.

The Project Essay deals with the author's experience with the primary in church school. The study has four chapters in all. The introductory chapter deals with the objective of Christian Education and goals for the primary. Chapter two gives a brief historical background of the Central Presbyterian Church and the setting of Christian Education for the primary. Chapter three describes the characteristics of primary children, leaders; the curriculum and the material; methods; room and equipment; and the relationship of the family with the Church. The last chapter consists of findings and recommendations.

Finally, the author wishes to express her gratitude to all her teachers who inspired her. She is indebted to Mrs. Shantilata Yohan who was her major professor during the year of field work and was helpful by her daily guidance. The author is indebted to Dr. Jonathan Jackson her major advisor; who has taken special interest by his guidance and encouragement.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. What is Christian Education

The Christian Church has only one ministry which is described in the New Testament, that is, "Ministry of reconciliation". This ministry is many faceted. It includes teaching, preaching, proclaiming, witnessing, and hearing. All these parts of the ministry are co-related and so no part of the ministry can be isolated from the whole. From the beginning educational work has been a vital part of the church's entire ministry. Marvin Taylor points out three major components in Christian education: ( 1) learning to participate in the christian community; (2) appropriating the Christian<sup>1</sup> heritage; and (3) training for mission.

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Marvin J. Taylor, An Introduction to Christian Education  
(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 14



Adelaide case provides us with a good definition, "Christian education is the effort to make available for our generation ---- children, young people, and adults -- the accumulated treasures of Christian life and thought in such a way that God in Christ may carry on his redemptive work in each human soul and in the common life of man."<sup>1</sup>

"Christain education is", accerding to Lewis Sherrill, "an attempt, ordinarily by the members of the Christian community, to participate in and to guide the changes which take place in persons in their relationships with God, with the Church, with the other persons, with the physical world, and with one's self".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Randolph Crump Miller, Education for Christian Living (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 53 - 54.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: MacMillan Press, 1955), p. 82

The work of the Cooperative Curriculum Project, The Church's Educational Ministry describes Christian education in very simple words, "that ministry of the Church which provides the educational undergirding for the Church's entire ministry of worship, witness, and work."<sup>1</sup>

In other words fellowship, worship, work, service, participation and sharing are different parts of Christian education.

B. The Objective of Christian Education

The objective provides motivation and guidance. An objective needs to meet theological standards. The Cooperative Curriculum Project stated the objective of Christian education:

"The objective for Christian education is that all persons be aware of God through his self-disclosure, especially his

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<sup>1</sup> Cooperative Curriculum Project, The Church's Educational Ministry (St. Louis, Missouri: The Bethany Press, 1965), p. 3.

redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ, and that they respond in faith and love -- to the end that they may know who they are and what their human situation means, as sons of God rooted in the Christian community, live in the Spirit of God in every relationship, fulfill their common<sup>1</sup> discipleship in the world, and abide in the Christian hope."

C. The Goals of Christian Education for Primary Children  
at Central Presbyterian Church

Marvin Taylor suggests that, "An objective needs to be within the realm of possibility in the light of our psychological and social understanding of the nature of the pupils. It needs to be within the teaching possibilities of these responsible for educational program. It must allow some room for the work of God, of the teacher, and of the pupil, with a relationale for each."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid; p. 8.

Keeping the above guideline in mind, the goals for Christian learning for primary are:

(1) To help the child to maintain a personal relationship with God through planned study activities and periods of informal worship, so that he should feel free to talk to God about life and its problems. His ideas of God will develop and he will learn that God is the Father of all people. He lives and cares through people. One can talk to Him anytime, anywhere. He is a righteous God who grieves when the child does wrong, but He also forgives.

(2) To guide the child so that his ideas of Jesus will develop and he appreciate Jesus as a friend and helper, who taught what God is like. The primary child often thinks of his own conduct in the light of the example of Jesus.

(3) To guide the child so that his Church relationship will develop. At this age he can develop a sense of being a part of the Church fellowship. Through worship in the morning, and through Church parties and dinners he can participate in the fellowship of the Church.

(4) To guide the child to develop the knowledge of the Bible. He can learn ways of living from the people in the Bible.

(5) To guide the child in developing the habits of Christian living; awareness of right and wrong; a desire to help.

(6) To guide the child in developing a concern for the welfare of others at home and around the world. He should develop his social relationships by helping the aged or sick, doing home chores, helping his family and neighborhood in regular work.<sup>1</sup>

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Taylor, Op. Cit; p. 95

## II. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### A. Historical Background of the Central Presbyterian Church

In the year 1858 thirty-nine members of the First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta signed and sent a memorial to Flint River Presbytery. The memorial pointed up the need of two Presbyterian Churches in Atlanta and asked that second Church be constituted. In answer to the memorial Flint River Presbytery constituted a new church on February 11, 1858. Organization of the Church followed on February 14, 1858.

Since most of the membership came from First Presbyterian Church they did not wish to call their new Church "Second Presbyterian Church". Therefore, the name "Central Presbyterian" was a happy and descriptive choice. The new congregation was faced with the immediate problem of a place to worship. Through the kindness of the officials of the City of Atlanta permission was granted to the Church to hold services in the Atlanta City Hall until a lot could be found and a Church built. The City Hall at that time occupied the site of the present State Capitol.

On May 20, 1858 a lot was bought on Washington Street directly across the street from the City Hall and construction of the Church begun in the summer. The building required almost two years to complete. The first service was held in this new Church on March 4, 1860.

Dr. John L. Rogers, a Pennsylvanian and a graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary, was called to be the congregations first Pastor. Dr. Robert Q. Mallard was the second Pastor. He was the "War Pastor" who was captured by Sherman's troops and imprisoned during the terrible days of the Battle of Atlanta and the burning of the City (1863-66). The basement of the Church, where Sunday School was held, was used as a slaughter house by the Union forces. The Church was mostly destroyed and only a damaged spot was left. In October, 1885 a new building was dedicated.

Most of the Churches have moved away, leaving the down town area because their people left it. But Central Presbyterian Church still stands in the same spot on Washington Street it has occupied for more than one hundred years. Its membership

is a strong 1,700 or more. Its remarkable Sunday School attendance is the envy of many residential Churches. It has no debt, and its budget approximately is \$150,000 a year.

The emphasis at Central - in Sanctuary, Sunday School, Baby Clinic, Neighborhood Work, Young People's Programs, Music, Chapel - is always on service to the community.

B. The Sunday School at Central Presbyterian Church

The Sunday School grew rapidly during Dr. Lacy's pastorate (1919 - 1926) and additional space was needed. To meet this need a beautiful educational building was erected in 1925 as a memorial to Mr. John J. Eagan and to Mrs. Virginia Orme Campbell. The Church has Sunday School area with increased capacity; gramped by location and sixe for different age groups, each well furnished and equipped with coat space, wash rooms, storage room, and electrical outlets, good lighting, ventilation and air conditioning.



The Sunday School is a very essential part of the life of Central Church. The enrollment in the Sunday School for the year 1971 - 1972 was 445. The average attendance was 284.

The Sunday School began at 9:30 A. M. and ended at 10:30 A. M. The morning worship began at 11:00 A. M. and normally was over about 12:00 noon. Most of the people who attended the Sunday School, usually stayed for the morning Church worship services. Many times young people were given a chance to take part in 11:00 O'clock worship service by reading the Bible passage, word of prayer and singing. After worship service most of the Church members take advantage of eating at the Church in Fellowship hall by paying \$1.25 per person. This is a wonderful opportunity for Christian fellowship around the common meal.

IMPORTANT ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL

Division	Age	Total Enrollment	Average Attendance	No. of Teachers
1. Nursey	2-4 yrs.	24	17	3
2. Kindergarten Department	5 yrs.	25	15	5
3. Elementary Division	6-11yrs	66	41	7
4. Youth Division	12-18yrs	60	45	12
5. Friendship Class		46	28	3
Study Class		61	27	3
Y.W.B.C.	19yrs and over	20	15	2
Brotherhood		54	28	3
Inquires' Class		20	11	4
T.N.T. Class		27	28	4
Library Staff	20yrs - 30	5	5	
General Officers		15	15	
Fidelin		20	9	3
Total		445	284	

Table No. 1

NUMBER OF CHURCH SCHOOL WORKERS

Leaders of Sunday Church School		Number
I	Director of Religious Education	1
II	General Superintendent	1
III	Associate Superintendents	
	a) Children's Divison	2
	b) Youth Division	1
	c) Adult Division	1
IV	Secretaries	1
	a) Children Division	
	b) Adult Division	
V	Teachers	
	a) Children's Division	15
	b) Youth Division	12
	c) Adult Division	22

Table No. 2

### III THE PRIMARY CHILD AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

#### A. The Primary Child

It is very necessary for the teacher to understand the child she teaches in order to know the present needs, interests, abilities, and potentialities of him. The teacher needs to know physical mental, social, emotional and apiritual characteristics of the child which help her to know what and how to teach him.

#### PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

At this age the Primary child is growing unevenly. His finer muscles are beginning to develop slowly which makes him restless. His muscle developmenr demands activity. The child at this age wants to do rather than to watch. He likes to construct. Also he tires easily. He has more resistance to disease than the Beginner. He can care for many of his physical needs.

According to the physical needs the teacher should provide short practice periods and avoid detailed work. She should provide various activities. It is wise to provide active expressional activity and offer worthwhile projects. Because the child tires easily at this age, alternate activity and quietness is necessary and important.

#### MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The most important mental characteristics which have a part in his new findings are that child is learning to read and write. He makes false conclusions. He is better able to distinguish between fact and fancy. His senses are keen. He lives in present. He is curious and he has a good imagination. He has a good memory and he is literal - minded.

A good teacher must know her pupil and choose activities for him according to his mental needs. This is the age when the child says, "Let me read it" "Let me do it," "Let me write it." A Sunday School teacher should provide Bible games using words and numbers. She should let him read his workbook or copy Scripture verses. It is good to provide opportunities to reason and draw his own conclusion. Teacher should try to

answer questions as they arise as he is curious to know. Let him "act out" stories so, he gets a chance to use his imagination. Teacher should try to keep promises and not to hurt child's feelings as the child has good memory.

#### SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Child at this age wants to play with others. He wants peer friendships. He likes to talk. He wants to be grown--up. He likes non-competitive activities. He also likes the opposite sex. He is inclined to be selfish. He respects authority.

According to these social characteristics the teacher should provide group activity. The teacher should talk with him about his interests and try to provide non-competitive activities. Words like "little" should be avoided. It is good to have boys and girls in the same class. This is the time when the teacher should teach the child to think of the others too and not to be selfish. The teacher should try to live to be worthy of his respect which is very important.

### EMOTIONAL

Because the primary child is yet emotionally immature, he is easily excited and sometimes he resists personal demands. At other times he may withdraw his personal demands because of shyness. He is impatient. He still has many fears. He needs security and he can sympathize with others.

It is good to provide the child a calm atmosphere. At this age the child needs to be praised for his accomplishments. It is important to choose work on his level. The teacher should use child's contributions to class discussion. Many times the child needs help to feel secure.

### SPIRITUAL

The primary likes Sunday School. He has a rapidly growing concept of God. He has faith in prayer. He may be ready to accept Christ as his Saviour. He is curious about death and<sup>1</sup> heaven and he wants to be good.

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Marjorie Elaine Soderholm, Understanding The Pupil (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 9-34

Keeping these things in mind the teacher should give him a part in the worship service and allow him to pray aloud during the service for which he should be asked ahead of time. It is better to explain about death simply and answer his questions about heaven as they arise. Teach him to accept God's answer and lead him to the Lord.

#### B The Leader Of Primary Children

To achieve the objective of Christian Education a teacher should know each child as an individual by observing and spending necessary time with him.

Basic qualifications of a successful teacher are as follows:

1. To have fair understanding of how personality develops.
2. To have knowledge of what the Bible teaches.
3. To have a deep Christian experience and willingness to share that experience.
4. Should be friendly, kind, patient, humble, responsible, sincere, and dedicated.
5. Should know child psychology
6. Should have a strong personality and willingness to grow physically, mentally and spiritually.
7. Should be a model and ideal for the pupils.



#### THE WRITER'S EFFORTS AS A SUCCESSFUL TEACHER

As an M. R. E. student I was guided by my instructor to get acquainted with the nature and purpose of my work. I was required to read one book every month and several articles from periodicals. We met with our instructor as a group to solve our problems and to share our experiences in different churches with different children at different situations. The individual meetings and discussions with the instructor were also helpful. Each student was given an opportunity to demonstrate his lesson to the group who role played as his Sunday class.

I was able to respond sensitively to children's moods and also learned the techniques of handling the group. This was possible because I came to know each child by talking and observing during different activities individually and as a group. Meeting with the parents helped me to know the family background, interest and individual needs.

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Frances Cole McLester, Teaching in the Church School (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 147

My lessons were pre-planned. I studied the entire Teacher's Guide for the entire term and then again prepared each lesson in the unit immediately following each teaching session.

I made the lesson plans for each lesson including purpose, approach, development, conclusion, and application.

Accerding to each lesson I prepared the resource material like pictures, stories, magazine articles,news clipping, maps, globe. The Children enjoyed film strips and music very much.

I felt the necessity of being in the Sunday School class not only on time but before time to set up the worship center, write the day's lesson and Bible verse on chalk-board, arrange the teaching aids and chairs around the table. The children enjoyed doing this with me if they arrived earlier too.

It was always necessary and helpful to evaluate the lesson each sunday immediately following the session which I did. It helped me to discover how nearly the session achieved the purpose of the lesson and if the purpose met the pupils' needs. It gave me the idea if the application augmented the learning situation.

The celebration of children's birthdays in the Sunday School class made each child feel personally important.

At times like Christmas, Thanksgiving children enjoyed the opportunity of real playing. They acted out a few Bible stories.

We began our session by a short prayer. Usually the prayer was not only for guidance, strength, wisdom and understanding but it also included the name of each child in the class. At times children took part in short prayers.

A few times children wrote litaries with the help of teacher. They loved to learn and sing choruses. They also showed their creativity and imaginations by dwareing and printing. They made beautiful Christmas cards, Thanksgiving cards, Mothersday cards.

Story - telling was the most interesting part of the class. Children liked to hear and tell the stories from the Old and New Testaments.

Although the pupils were encouraged to bring their Bibles with them it was my biggest disappointment. The children always enjoyed memorizing the verse of the day.

I found the question and answer method one of the best and most common. It kept the children alert and active in the class.

### C. The Curriculum And Material

"The curriculum of Christian Education may be organized by planning to involve the learners, with all their varied needs and developing experience, in the Church's ongoing study, fellowship, worship, work, witness and mission----in which they are helped to come face to face with the Gospel through the **study** of the Bible and through the life of devotion; see the relevance of the Gospel to the understanding of all of life (God, man, nature, and history), accept the promises and implications of the Christian faith; and become committed to membership in the witnessing community and to full discipliship<sup>1</sup> in the world".

Marvin Taylor in his An Introduction to Christian Education describes the following major elements in curriculum.

1. Objective: The Objective provides a way of focusing the various facts of the Christian religion so they can be articulated in a program.

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<sup>1</sup>

Marvin Taylor (ed.), Religious Education (Nashville: Abingdom Press, 1960), p. 105

2. Design: The design is an arrangement of materials and experiences - Bible, songs, stories, activities - in order to accomplish the purpose.

3. Organizing Principle: This is the formula by which the design is carried out.

4. Comprehensiveness: This means that all of the important areas of thought and action must be accounted for in the final curriculum.

5. Balance: The amount of the time allocated to each topic or unit of the curriculum defines its balance.

6. Sequence: The problem of realting the materials to each succeeding age level is called sequence.

7. Interpretation: Every curriculum is an interpretation<sup>1</sup> of the Bible.

Central Presbyterian Sunday School uses The Covenant Life Curriculum published by The CLC Press, Richmond, Virginia. It is biblical in content with a graded approach. The primary curriculum booklet was God and His Covenant People by Mary Baine Rudolph and illustrated by Shannon Stirnweis. This course is divided into three units: (1) The Book of the Old Testament.

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<sup>1</sup>

Taylor, Op. Cit., pp. 159-160

(2) The Book of the New Testament, and (3) The Book in the life of the Church. There is a Teacher's Course Guide. The Book of the Covenant People by Elsie B. Stryker and The Church Teaching Children Grades One Through Six (Revised) by Mary Baine Rudolph. These are very helpful in suggesting activities, how to teach the lesson what teaching aids to use.

The other book we used for the second half of the year was The Beginning of the Church by Stuart D. Currie and illustrated by Kathleen Elgin. There are few units in this. Each unit is divided into weeks. For this book we used the Teacher's Course Guide: The Beginning of the Church by Elezabeth H. Glasscock.

The program has provisions for study, worship, service, and fellowship. At places the language is difficult for this age group but the books have good illustrations, colors which children enjoy very much. The print is big. We used special programs and lessons for special occasions which are not included in the books - for example during Christmas season children had Christmas party and Christmas program which included Christmas play, story, filmstrip, choruses, verses etc. They made Christmas cards.

D. The Room And Equipment

A good physical environment and arrangement help to keep children's minds alert and busy. The primary class room at Central was on the second floor. It was well lighted and ventilated. The children could look out through the windows the beautiful trees, blue sky and tall buildings. The rest-room for children was on the same floor.

We had comfortable table and enough chairs for the children in proportion to their heights. There was a place to hang the coats. The cupboard was big enough to keep different materials safe and in order.

The children's library was on the first floor and therefore each time children had to go downstairs to use the library. We had enough material in the class-room like maps, charts, globe, pictures, work-materials as scissors, crayons or paint, construction paper, clay, pencils, etc. The teacher had to arrange and prepare ahead of time to use filmstrips, projector, screen, slides, record player, etc. But teacher accompanied the children to go to the library to check out the books.

The chalkboard was low enough so that children could write on it without raising their heels. The bulletin board always attracted the children. They loved to arrange it according to the season and occasions such as Fall, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine, Halloween, etc. There was arrangement for hanging the maps, charts, or other material which is helpful for the improvement of the student's learning.

There was a separate big room which was commonly used by different groups at different times. This room was big enough for them to play and engage in other activities like Christmas party and gatherings for joint programs.

#### E. The Family And The Church

The responsibility for the religious education of the child must be distributed. The tendency has been for the home and the community to shift their shares and to place them upon the Church School. The Church has failed wherever it has tried to carry the whole load. Although the entire of the system should remain in the Church still the home must fulfil its obligation to the child.



Religious Education is a much involved process that requires careful and intelligent direction. The Church and home need each other because they both have the common cause and mission. It is important for the parents to know the objectives in order to help the teachers carry on their work successfully to fulfil the goals. The child is in the Sunday School class only for an hour on Sunday; the rest of seven days he is at home with his parents most of the time. Therefore, the teachers need help of the children's parents in knowing their interest problems and needs.

It is a good idea to invite parents to the Sunday School on special occasions such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc. At times like these parents enjoy watching their children taking part in plays, group songs, reciting poems, tell stories and so on. The children also like their parents to be a part of sharing their activities. They want to invite their parents for Christmas party. They also enjoy making cards for mother and father, for Mother's day and Father's day.

At Central there were a number of such occasions when parents were invited to Sunday School programs. This proved to be a good opportunity for the parents of becoming acquainted with their children's work. It gave the teachers a good chance to know the children's parents and to discuss their problems and needs.

Occasional meetings of parents and teachers are suggested by some people in which they can discuss their common problems and solutions. This was not the case at Central in our Sunday School and I realize that it is not easy for parents and teachers to get together on work days. Also, it was not possible to meet on Sundays. But there was a substitute to this. There were times when the teacher made telephone conversation with parents of children to inquire about the welfare or health of their children.

To visit a child at home is very much helpful in knowing the child's parents and also the background of the child. It is good on parents' part to invite the teacher sometimes.

Due to transportation problem I could not make a special effort to visit the children or parents at home but I made use of the lunch time at Church on Sundays after the worship service. I sat at a different table each time with a different child and his family. At such times I made mention of some of the books, magazines, leaflets and Sunday School material and encouraged parents to read them.

#### IV. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Central Presbyterian Church is a White Church with the membership of about people. The majority of the members of the Church can be classified as middle class people. Of course, there are a few rich people as well. The average distance of the majority of people's resident is 6 to 9 miles although there are people who live farther away.

The Church is primary growing in membership. There is a new addition of education building which gave more space and class rooms now. The library continues to grow in number of volumes and especially in other audio visual aids. Because of good use of the library the number of the library staff increased to five.

The study material is good for the Primary as the program has provisions for study, worship, service, and fellowship. The colored pictures in the book help children to understand the lesson better. The language is difficult but the teacher always tries to explain the meaning of difficult words and it helps the children to learn new words. We realized the usefulness of audio visual and showing filmstrips helped us more to make the lesson interesting. The children concentrate more and remember the lesson better if they see filmstrips. They also show their interest by asking questions about the story.

They enjoyed the activities. Inviting visitors or teachers should be more often as it gives better understanding of the ways in which other church school works. Outdoor activities should be encouraged more. It doesn't have to be during class hour but it can be on week days or after worship service. For example the children enjoyed going to Six Flags Over Georgia with the parrent and teachers and other class children after the Sunday worship service. In order to be more effective, teacher should encourage such out-door activities and invite students to their homes sometimes. It proved that this attitude helps the students to feel quite free with the teacher.

The Central Presbyterian is a down town church where the race ratio has drastically changed in the last five years. This institution has quickly responded to the need of the present situation. There is a very effective program of week Day Child Care and regular meals at a very low cost.

Sharing God's love with all persons is the responsibility of every Church. If so, it is the responsibility of Central to **respond** further to the needs of people of all ages and races ---- and not only on Sundays but during the week as well. This response could be put into action by opening the library and providing study and recreation facilities to children and youth. By working out a program parents could become facilitators of the idea by donating their time and talent. I see the beginning already, but there are avenues for **greater** possibilities, more involvement and great miracles through the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit functioning through persons who really believe the love of God and brotherhood of man.

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